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UNCLAS PORT LOUIS 000128

SIPDIS  
SENSITIVE

AF/E FOR MARIA BEYZEROV

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: AMED PGOV KFLU MP

SUBJECT: SWINE FLU: MAURITIUS CONVENES "CRISIS COMMITTEE" TO PLAN  
AHEAD FOR POSSIBLE CASES

REF: SECSTATE 41768

¶1. (U) On April 27 the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life convened a meeting of the "Crisis Committee which has been set up this morning" (according to the notice faxed to the Embassy) to plan ahead for the eventuality of swine flu affecting the island nation. Health Minister Rajeshwar Jeetah chaired the meeting, which included statements by senior health and transportation officials, including the heads of the port and airport authorities. Despite the rhetoric of the invitation, officials stressed that there are no known or suspected cases in Mauritius, that swine flu is generally less deadly than avian flu, and that the point of the meeting was to ensure that existing prevention and monitoring systems are functioning. The head of the airport authority sought clarification from the Minister concerning a request that captains of aircraft inform ground control 30 minutes before landing of any cases of sickness on board. A/DCM, asked to share any additional points from the USG, noted that his guidance on the outbreak was very similar to what was being shared at the meeting.

COMMENT

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¶2. (SBU) Another purpose of the meeting, which was well covered by local media, was certainly to reassure the public. Living on an island that depends on tourism and with worldwide air connections, Mauritians naturally feel concern that they are vulnerable to a possible epidemic spread by travelers. This was an opportunity for the government to show the people that it is planning ahead to protect them.

BLASER